



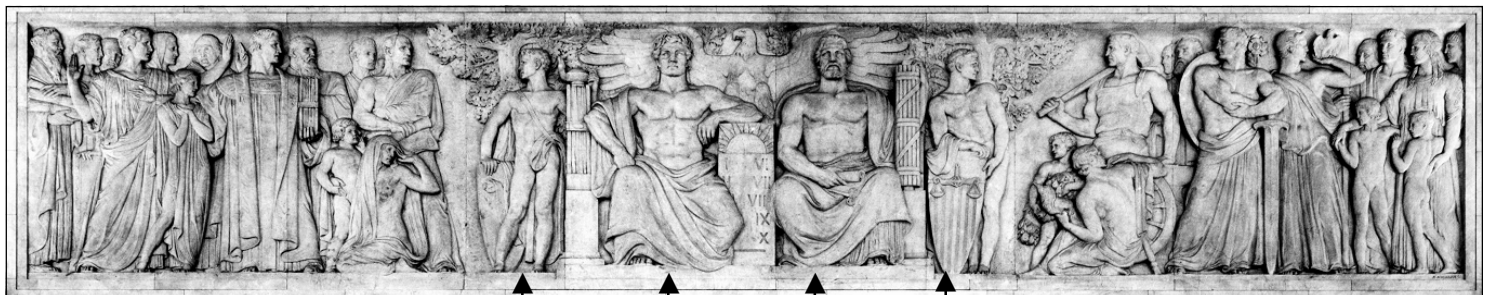
Courtroom Friezes: East and West Walls

INFORMATION SHEET

The architect of the Supreme Court building, Cass Gilbert (1867–1934), selected Adolph A. Weinman (1870–1952), a noted Beaux-Arts architectural sculptor of the period who had studied under Augustus Saint-Gaudens, to design the friezes that adorn the walls of the Courtroom. Weinman's training stressed that a sculpture's subject matter should correlate with the function of the building in which it was to be placed. In this case, he designed friezes portraying both allegorical representations of Law, on the East and West walls, and historical lawgivers, on the North and South walls. It was common practice during this period to allow the sculptor artistic freedom to create art that would fit within the framework of the architect's vision of the building. Thus, Weinman's choice of symbols and figures were his own and reflected his training in the classical and Beaux-Arts traditions.

The East wall frieze is located directly above the Bench and focuses on two male figures that represent the ***Majesty of Law*** and the ***Power of Government***. According to a letter from Weinman to Gilbert, the tablet between them symbolizes the first ten amendments to the Constitution, also known as the Bill of Rights. The allegorical figures standing on either side of the central figures symbolize ***Wisdom***, on the left, and ***Justice***, on the right. Weinman described the figures grouped to the right side as the ***Safeguard of the Liberties and Rights of the People in their pursuit of Happiness*** and those on the left side as ***The Defense of Human Rights and Protection of Innocence*** (below).

The East Wall Frieze



*The Defense of Human Rights and
Protection of Innocence*

Wisdom

Justice

*Safeguard of the Liberties and Rights
of the People in their Pursuit of
Happiness*

***The Majesty
of Law***

***The Power of
Government***

According to Weinman, the theme of the West wall frieze is the struggle between Good and Evil. In this sculpture, the central female figures, **Justice** and **Divine Inspiration**, are flanked by representations of **Wisdom**, with an owl perched on his shoulder, and **Truth**, holding a mirror and a rose. Moving to the left from the central figures, the “Powers of Good” are **Defense of Virtue**, **Charity**, **Peace**, **Harmony** and **Security**. The “Powers of Evil”, moving to the right, are **Corruption**, **Slander**, **Deception** and **Despotic Power**. **Justice**, leaning on her sword, has her head turned to keep a watchful eye on the Powers of Evil.

The West Wall Frieze

“The Powers of Good”

“The Powers of Evil”

